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United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

1. The Secretary-General believes that the mandate of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific remains valid, and that the Centre could be a useful instrument for fostering a climate of cooperation and disarmament in the region. The regional dialogue initiated by the Regional Centre, in 1989, through the organization of disarmament meetings in Asia and the Pacific, has come to be known as the "Kathmandu process". The process has received wide support from Member States and academic groups within the region as a means of identifying pressing disarmament and security-related issues relevant to the region and exploring region-oriented solutions.

2. During the reporting period from August 1998 to July 1999, the Centre continued to promote disarmament and security through the following three regional disarmament meetings it organized:

(a) A meeting on the theme "Towards a world free from nuclear weapons", held at Nagasaki, from 24 to 27 November 1998;

(b) A meeting on the theme "Security concerns and regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific", held at Kathmandu, from 18 to 20 March 1999;

(c) A meeting on the theme "Security concerns and disarmament strategy for the next decade", held at Kyoto, Japan, from 27 to 30 July 1999.

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3. Pursuant to the request of the General Assembly contained in its resolutions 52/38S and 53/77A, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, through the Regional Centre, continues to extend technical and substantive assistance to the five Central Asian States in their drafting of a treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. During the reporting period, the Group met three times (Geneva, 7–9 October 1998 and 27–30 April 1999; and Tashkent, 1–3 February 1999), and has made substantive progress in further improving the text of the draft treaty and in resolving differences on the remaining key issues.

4. Due to the lack of sufficient resources to finance the physical establishment and operations of the Centre at Kathmandu, the Director continues for the time being to operate from United Nations Headquarters in New York.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 53/78 B, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request, and covers the period from August 1998 to July 1999.

II. Activities of the Centre from August 1998 to July 1999

3. The Secretary-General believes that the mandate of the Regional Centre remains valid and that the Centre could be a useful instrument for fostering a climate of cooperation and disarmament in the region. Indeed, consultations carried out by the Director of the Centre with Member States and academic institutes within and outside the region as well as meetings organized by the Centre have confirmed continued support for the Centre's role in encouraging regional and subregional dialogue for the enhancement of openness, transparency and confidence-building and the promotion of disarmament and security. In this connection, the value of regional meetings previously organized by the Centre has been highly commended by the General Assembly and the Asia and Pacific community.

4. In line with this approach and within the limited financial resources available during the reporting period, the Centre was able to organize three major regional meetings, at Nagasaki; Kathmandu; and Kyoto, Japan. The entire costs of the three meetings were financed from voluntary contributions of Member States and other interested organizations.

5. The first of the three meetings, a United Nations conference on disarmament, on the theme "Towards a world free from nuclear weapons", was held at Nagasaki from 24 to 27 November 1998. The conference, organized in close cooperation with the Government of Japan and the Nagasaki Prefecture and City, was attended by 70 participants representing Governments, research institutes, the mass media and non-governmental organizations. The stalemate in nuclear disarmament negotiations and other developments, such as the nuclear tests conducted by two States in South Asia, presented the international community with acute and new challenges. At this critical juncture, the Nagasaki conference considered, *inter alia*, how to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons capability; how to improve and strengthen the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime; the multilateral approach towards nuclear disarmament and the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons; immediate priorities to avoid accidental nuclear war; how to promote nuclear disarmament and practical steps to that end; and national and regional security today.

6. As the host city of the conference, Nagasaki provided participants with a unique opportunity to look at the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons through a visit to the Nagasaki Memorial Museum and interaction with the *Hibakusha* (nuclear victims). As a result of the Nagasaki conference, the participants unanimously adopted a resolution in which, *inter alia*, they reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that Nagasaki will remain the last city in the world to have suffered from the calamity of nuclear weapons.

7. The regional dialogue promoted by the Centre through the organization of annual meetings in the Asia and Pacific region and other means has come to be known as the "Kathmandu process", as reflected in General Assembly resolutions. The continuation of this process as a means of identifying pressing disarmament and security issues and exploring region-oriented solutions has gained the strong support of Member States and academic groups within the region. Strong support has also been expressed for the establishment of a close network, linking the Centre and its interlocutors within the region, as a way of exchanging data and information related to disarmament and security. The Secretary-General intends to effectively use the Regional Centre as a useful instrument to provide a valuable forum for discussions on regional confidence-building and security-building measures, and he is gratified with the continued political and financial support given to it in the region.

8. It should be noted that in recognition of the importance of the "Kathmandu process", the Council for Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region, an organization of academic and research institutes in Asia and the Pacific, has amended its charter so as to grant observer status to the Centre, the first observer admitted.

9. The second meeting organized by the Centre was the eleventh regional disarmament meeting in the Asia and Pacific region, on the theme "Security concerns and regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific", held at Kathmandu from 18 to 20 March 1999. This meeting was attended by some 35 participants representing Governments, research institutes and non-governmental organizations, mainly within the region.

10. Held on the eve of the twenty-first century, this meeting addressed security concerns today in Asia and the Pacific, and focused on regional cooperation for confidence-building, stability and prosperity. In this context, the meeting also dealt with the important issues impinging upon "human security", such as illicit arms transfer, terrorism, environmental protection and poverty.

11. The third meeting, on the theme "Security concerns and disarmament strategy for the next decade", was held at Kyoto, Japan, from 27 to 30 July 1999. The conference, organized in close cooperation with the Government of Japan and Kyoto City, was attended by 70 participants representing governments, research institutes, the mass media and non-governmental organizations, mainly from the Asia and Pacific region.

12. For 10 years since 1989, the United Nations, in close cooperation with the Government of Japan, has organized annually in Japan a United Nations conference on disarmament issues. The Kyoto conference marks the beginning of the second decade in this joint activity. Once again, the Asia and Pacific community decided to focus on several key issues in the field of security and disarmament with a view to promoting peace and stability in this region. The Kyoto conference considered, *inter alia*, the disarmament priorities for the next decade; nuclear disarmament and missile proliferation; the promotion of peace and security including confidence-building measures and human security; and stability and cooperation in North-East Asia.

13. As in the past, the proceedings of the above meetings will be published by the Centre.

14. Pursuant to a request of the General Assembly contained in its resolution 53/77A, the Centre continued to assist the five Central Asian States in the drafting of a treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. As a way of implementing General Assembly resolutions 52/38 S and 53/77 A, the Centre organized the second United Nations-sponsored expert group meeting at Geneva, from 7 to 9 October 1998. At that meeting, the experts held substantive and in-depth discussions in drafting the articles of a future treaty.

15. The Government of Uzbekistan hosted a meeting from 1 to 3 February 1999, at Tashkent, to further consider the draft treaty. At that meeting, the experts broadened the area of agreement on many articles and identified the remaining key issues.

16. From 27 to 30 April 1999, the Centre organized the third United Nations-sponsored expert group meeting at Geneva. The experts were able to improve the text of a future treaty, and held intensive consultations to resolve differences on the remaining key issues, including a definition and usage of terms; the issue of transit; other agreements; and future expansion of the zone. The Director of the Centre attended all three meetings and provided substantive advice. The next United Nations-sponsored expert group meeting will be held at Sapporo, Japan, in October 1999. The International Atomic Energy Agency has been invited to provide expert advice, commencing from the second United Nations-sponsored expert group meeting in October 1998.

17. As a means of promoting cooperation between the Centre and its constituents, the Centre provided technical and advisory services to the United Nations Association of Japan for its organization of the fifth Kanazawa symposium, on the theme "North-East Asia dialogue and cooperation beyond 2000", which was held from 1 to 4 June 1999. The Director of the Centre attended the symposium.

18. The Department for Disarmament Affairs co-sponsored an international conference on the theme "Confidence-building measures and regional dialogue: retrospect and prospect", held at Wadduwa, Sri Lanka, from 17 to 19 June 1999, and provided political advice to its organizer, the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies of Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Director of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific attended the meeting representing the Department, and delivered an opening statement.

III. Staffing and financing

19. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/39D, the Centre was established on the basis of existing resources and voluntary contributions that Member States and interested organizations may make to that end. Consultations held with the host country on operative paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 49/76D of 15 December 1994 were inconclusive. As a result, a significant amount of resources will be required for the establishment and operation of the Centre at Kathmandu. In view of this fact and considering that all contributions are earmarked for substantive activities of the Centre, it will not be possible to establish the Centre physically at Kathmandu with the current resource situation. For that reason, the Director continues to operate temporarily from United Nations Headquarters in New York, an arrangement that will have to remain in force until a reliable means can be found to finance the entire cost of the Centre's operation at

Kathmandu. In the meantime, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Information Office at Kathmandu have continued to provide the Centre with logistical support for the meeting held there each year.

20. During the reporting period August 1998 to July 1999, voluntary contributions in the amount of $278,650 have been received. In addition, a number of Governments contributed to the work of the Centre by hosting conferences and absorbing a major portion of the costs. In this respect, the Secretary-General wishes to express his appreciation to the Prefecture and City of Nagasaki for the 1998 Nagasaki conference, and to the City of Kyoto for the 1999 Kyoto conference. The Secretary-General also wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Italy, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Norway, China, the Republic of Korea, Sweden and Thailand, as well as to Rissho Kosei-Kai, a Japanese non-governmental organization, for their contributions, and to the Government of Nepal for its overall support of the Centre. While appreciating the substantive contributions received, the Secretary-General appeals to Member States to continue to make voluntary contributions to the Centre in order to ensure its viability and enhance its effective functioning, including the continuation of the Kathmandu process. The status of the Trust Fund for the Centre will be contained in an addendum to the present report.